

End direct funding of ethnic groups, federal multiculturalism report says

By Jim Bronskill
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A federally commissioned report on multiculturalism says the government should stop giving money directly to ethnic groups because it creates the impression the federal government is catering to special interests.

The report says Canadians are confused about the government's vision of multiculturalism, uncertain about federal activities in the area and disappointed with the results.

"Not all Canadians have benefited equally from or embraced with enthusiasm the goals of multiculturalism," concludes the report. "Nor have all of the implied promises of multiculturalism been fully realized."

It says the government should help define a "new Canadian identity" based on such values as decency, peace and compassion.

A draft version of the report, prepared in March by Brighton Research, has just now been quietly released by the Heritage Department.

It says over the last 60 years Canada has pursued the "sometimes elusive and controversial vision" of a multicultural society in which people keep their linguistic and cultural heritage while enjoying shared rights, freedoms

Update

The issue: Federal multiculturalism programs.

What's new: A report commissioned by the Heritage Department recommends ending direct funding for ethnic groups.

What it means: Some believe handing millions of dollars to various groups reinforces the impression that multiculturalism is a program for special interests rather than for all Canadians.

What's next: The department's review of multiculturalism programs is expected early next year.

and obligations.

The federal government plans to give about \$18.5 million in 1996-97 to hundreds of groups involved in multicultural programs devoted to race relations, community support, culture and language. The programs, which range from helping artists to preventing of child abuse in minority communities, are intended to encourage racial harmony and respect for other cultures.

The consultants studied the roots of multiculturalism, legislation, pro-

grams, public attitudes, media coverage and the opinions of group leaders.

Their report says that although Canadians support the idea of a society made up of people with diverse backgrounds, they find the government's vision of multiculturalism confusing. Many believe it lacks focus and ghettoizes ethnic groups.

The report suggests giving the money earmarked for multiculturalism to public agencies and organizations such as the CBC that shape the life of all Canadians. Various ethnic groups would not receive money directly, but could still be partners in activities.

Emmanuel Dick, of the Canadian Ethnocultural Council, said he shares some of the report's sentiments. But he added it's wrong to change the funding practices simply because the government has failed to educate Canadians about multicultural programs.

"Someone is not spending the time to get the message through."

Jim Abbott, the Reform party's heritage critic, said the report confirms that federal multicultural programs "have been an abject failure."

Heritage Department spokeswoman Claire Pilon said it's too early to comment on the recommendations.

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